The Gospel

According to Jonah

Lionel D C Hartley

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The Gospel According to Jonah
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Foreword

Jonah is the fifth book of the twelve Minor Prophets and relates a story about Jonah, an 8th century B.C. Hebrew Prophet.

The book of Jonah is not chiefly about a reluctant prophet or a great fish. It is about the God who relentlessly pursues sinners with mercy. To me (and others - including you hopefully) this is good news (Gospel), hence the title of this book.

Jonah's story foreshadows the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, whom Jesus Himself identified as the greater Jonah. The central message is captured in Jonah 2:9: "Salvation belongs to the LORD."

That declaration finds its fullest expression in the gospel, where God's grace is extended not only to Israel but to people of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation (Revelation 5:9) through the saving work of Christ.

Do not miss the hope that shines out of this book. The violent, terrible Ninevites are spared by God's

grace when they turn to Him. God keeps tenderly working with the twisted Jonah to accomplish God's goals on earth.

Jesus believed the Old Testament teaching about Jonah and the great fish.

There are people today who laugh at some passages in the Holy Bible. They think they know better than to believe a story like Jonah (Jonas) being swallowed by a big fish. But Jesus believed these things. "But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: 40) For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. 41) The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here" (Matthew 12:39-41).

Whether we have been outwardly evil, or outwardly a Christian with a twisted, selfish heart, God still wants to draw us closer to Him. Will we respond today?

Chapter 1. Why study Jonah?

A story is told of a devout father whose son was studying for the ministry.

The son decided to go to Europe for an advance degree, and the father worried that his simple faith would be spoiled by sophisticated, unbelieving professors.

"Don't let them take Jonah away from you," he admonished, figuring the swallowed-by-a-great-fish story might be the first part of the Bible to go.

Two years later when the son returned, the father asked, "Do you still have Jonah in your Bible?"

The son laughed. "Jonah! That story isn't even in your Bible!"

The father replied, "It certainly is! What do you mean?"

Again the son laughed and insisted, "It's not in your Bible. Go ahead, show it to me."

The old man fumbled through his Bible, looking for the Book of Jonah, but he couldn't find it. At last he checked the table of contents for the proper page.

When he turned there, he discovered the three pages comprising Jonah had been carefully cut from his Bible.

"I did it before I went away," said the son. "What's the difference whether I lose the Book of Jonah through studying under non-believers or you lose it through neglect?"

I have found that studying the biblical book of Jonah is valuable for both religious and literary reasons.

Although it is only four chapters long, it raises profound questions about God, humanity, justice, mercy, and purpose.

Jonah changed from retch to revivalist, from throw-up to show up, from puke to preacher, from sick to sermoniser, from filled with spew to filling the pew, in short, Jonah was called from the vomit by God to the vocation of God.

So if you're feeling down-in-the-mouth over this, remember Jonah. He came out all right.

Here are some key reasons we study the Book of Jonah:

1. It reveals God's compassion

Jonah expected God to judge the Assyrian city of Nineveh, yet God showed mercy when its people repented. The book emphasizes that God's concern extends beyond one nation or group.

2. It examines the struggle between obedience and resistance

Jonah's attempt to flee from God's calling highlights how people can resist difficult responsibilities, even when they know what is right.

3. It challenges prejudice and self-righteousness

Jonah wanted mercy for himself but not for his enemies. The story invites readers to examine whether they extend grace as readily as they receive it. "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:15)

"Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. 24) And when he had begun to reckon, one

was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. 25) But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. 26) The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. 27) Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. 28) But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. 29) And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. 30) And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. 31) So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. 32) Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: 33) Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? 34) And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. 35) So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also

unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." (Matthew 18:23-35)

4. It explores repentance and forgiveness

The people of Nineveh respond to Jonah's warning by turning from their wrongdoing. The book presents repentance as something available to anyone willing to change.

Repentance is about beginning to live differently; this is what the people of Nineveh did; they turned away and they turned to God. And when we repent; when we say; God forgive me; help me to live differently; He forgives!

> Better by far you should forgive and smile
> Than you should remember and be sad.
> — Christina Georgina Rossetti (1830-1894)

5. Interdependence is to be valued higher than independence

The book highlights the problem if doing our own 'thing' without consulting (or depending on) God. When we depend on our own wisdom or are disobedient, we come undone. "The fear of the LORD

is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction." (Proverbs 1:7) "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding." (Proverbs 9:10)

6. It raises questions about justice and mercy

Jonah wrestles with God's decision to forgive Nineveh. This tension between justice and mercy appears to be a central theme in philosophy and theology.

7. It points to hope and restoration

Jonah's rescue from the great fish symbolises a second chance. The book repeatedly shows that failure does not have to be the end of a person's story. God does not remind Jonah of his previous failure; nor does he write him off. God forgives him the calls him a second time and restores him and re-commissions him. Our God is all about second chances.

8. It has significance in Christian teaching

Both the Gospel of Matthew and Gospel of Luke record Jesus referring to "the sign of Jonah,"

comparing Jonah's three days in the fish to His own death and resurrection..

"But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: 40) For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. 41) The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here." (Matthew 12:39-41)

"And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. 30) For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation. 31) The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. 32) The men of Nineve shall rise up in the judgment with this

generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here." (Luke 11:29-32)

9. It ends with a question

Rather than providing a neat conclusion, the book closes with God asking Jonah whether He should care for the people of Nineveh. This invites every reader to consider their own response to God's compassion.

I would suggest that the book also ends with a question because Nineveh's repentance was only short-lived, because less than forty years later, Assyria overruns the northern kingdom of Israel and the book of Nahum (written at least 150 years after Jonah) introduces the new enemy, Babylon. Jonah said, "Nineveh will be destroyed' and God says, not yet. Nahum said, "Will Nineveh will be spared?' but the cup of iniquity was full.

10. It clarifies a common misconception

The book of Jonah is not primarily about a fish story nor is it merely about obedience. It's a story revealing God's mercy, with the key theme that God is compassionate toward sinners, including Israel's (or

our) enemies.

11. Jonah encourages us to think deeply

In summary, whether approached as history, theology, literature, or moral reflection, Jonah encourages us to think sincerely about: How we respond to God's calling, how we view those we consider outsiders or enemies, whether mercy should be limited or universal. It causes us to contemplate the relationship between justice, repentance, and forgiveness.

Its brevity (only 4 chapters totalling 48 verses) makes it easy to read in one sitting, but its themes have prompted discussion for centuries because they remain relevant to questions of faith, ethics, and human nature.

Jonah and the Whale

A chap named Jonah went to sea
A voyage to begin.
His ship was wrecked.
He, cast ashore, soon found a wayside inn.

Three days and nights he stayed inside,
And then — so runs the tale...
The landlord kicked poor Jonah out.
The inn was called *'The Whale.'*

— George Ratcliffe Woodward (1848–1934)
Miscellaneous Verse, Sacred and Secular (1928)

Chapter 2. Historical Background

Jonah ministered during the reign of Jeroboam II.

"In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel began to reign in Samaria, and reigned forty and one years. 24) And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. 25) He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gathhepher (2 Kings 14:23-25).

Nineveh was the capital of the Neo-Assyrian Empire and Assyria was infamous for violence and cruelty.

"Woe to the [bloodthirsty] city! it is all full of lies and robbery; the prey departeth not; 2) The noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots. 3) The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword and

the glittering spear: and there is a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcases; and there is none end of their corpses; they stumble upon their corpses: 4) Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the wellfavoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts. 5) Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts; and I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, and I will show the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame. 6) And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazingstock. 7) And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her? whence shall I seek comforters for thee? 8) Art thou better than populous No, that was situate among the rivers, that had the waters round about it, whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was from the sea? 9) Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite; Put and Lubim were thy helpers. 10) Yet was she carried away, she went into captivity: her young children also were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets: and they cast lots for her honourable men, and all her great men were bound in chains. 11) Thou also shalt be drunken: thou shalt be hid, thou also shalt seek strength because of

the enemy. 12) All thy strong holds shall be like fig trees with the firstripe figs: if they be shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater. 13) Behold, thy people in the midst of thee are women: the gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies: the fire shall devour thy bars. 14) Draw thee waters for the siege, fortify thy strong holds: go into clay, and tread the mortar, make strong the brickkiln. 15) There shall the fire devour thee; the sword shall cut thee off, it shall eat thee up like the cankerworm: make thyself many as the cankerworm, make thyself many as the locusts. 16) Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven: the cankerworm spoileth, and fleeth away. 17) Thy crowned are as the locusts, and thy captains as the great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known where they are. 18) Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria: thy nobles shall dwell in the dust: thy people is scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathereth them. 19) There is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?" (Nahum 3:1-19)

Jonah had every human reason to hate Nineveh, but primarily because it was the capital of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, one of Israel's most powerful and feared enemies.

Several factors likely contributed to Jonah's attitude:

1. Assyria was a brutal enemy

The Assyrians had a reputation for extreme violence. Their kings recorded how they conquered cities, deported populations, and punished rebels in graphic detail. Israel lived under the growing threat of Assyrian expansion, so Jonah would have seen Nineveh as representing oppression and danger.

2. He wanted justice, not mercy

God, however, desires mercy balanced with justice. "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face." (Psalms 89:14)

"Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." (Psalms 85:10)

When God called Jonah to warn Nineveh, Jonah

already suspected what would happen. Later, he admitted: "I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love..." (Jonah 4:2)

Jonah fled because he did not want Nineveh to repent and be spared. He wanted God to judge them.

3. National loyalty

Jonah was an Israelite prophet. Many Israelites expected God to protect Israel and punish its enemies. God's concern for a foreign nation challenged Jonah's understanding of who deserved God's mercy.

4. Personal resentment

By the end of the book, Jonah is angry that God has forgiven Nineveh. God responds by asking whether He should not care for a city with more than 120,000 people who "cannot tell their right hand from their left," along with many animals. "And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six-score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?" (Jonah 4:11).

The book contrasts Jonah's concern for a plant with

God's concern for an entire city.

5. The larger message

The book is less about Nineveh than about Jonah's heart. It asks the reader: "Can we accept mercy for people we dislike?"; "Should God's compassion extend even to our enemies?"; "Is forgiveness compatible with justice when people genuinely repent?"

Jonah's struggle reflects a deeply human conflict: wanting justice for those who have harmed us, while God calls us to recognise the possibility of repentance and mercy.

"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Luke 5:32)

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

The book doesn't deny Nineveh's wickedness; instead, it explores whether even the worst people can change and whether God's compassion can reach beyond national and personal boundaries.

Aside: Tarnishing Tarshish

It is interesting how something ordinary can take on extra-ordinary significance, and yet this extra-ordinary significance can so easily be sullied, making the thing again ordinary (or less than ordinary). In Old Testament times, the ships of Tarshish were regarded as a symbol of beauty, strength and lofty ideals. Even ships going to Tarshish took on this same significance. The name Tarshish became also an epithet for any merchant vessel (as if for, to or from that Mediterranean Sea port - Tarshish ships were even made as far away as Eziongaber or Etsjon-Geber on the Red Sea-- 2 Chronicles 20:36).

Isaiah 2:16 even lists the ships of Tarshish in their symbolic beauty and loftiness along with one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, the Cedars of Lebanon.

2 Chronicles 9:21, Jeremiah 10:9, Ezekiel 27:12 and Isaiah 60:9 all refer to the ships of Tarshish bringing gold, and other treasures. Ezekiel 27:25 and 38:13 even go so far as to suggest that praise from the merchants or ships of Tarshish is to be desired.

And yet, despite all this, Jonah, in a singular act of rebellion against God, changed this perception: 'But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD' (Jonah 1:3).

God has given us an earth-full of wonderful gifts, treasures to have and behold, ideals with which to aspire and good news to share. However, in our rebellion we quickly tarnish Tarshish.

The word tarnish comes from the French word 'ternir' from the root 'terne', meaning 'dark' and often refers to oxidation of surfaces due to misuse. Tarnish on many surfaces can be removed by polishing with denatured (methylated) spirit. We all have rebelled and tarnished many of God's glorious gifts. But it is not too late. We can still use God's Spirit to put a shine on these things and move us out of darkness into his marvellous light (1 Peter 2:9).

Chapter 3. Nationalism Versus God's kingdom

The book of Jonah is often taught as a challenge to nationalism when it becomes more important than God's kingdom. It doesn't condemn love of one's country, but it does confront the idea that God's purposes are limited to one nation or that He loves one people more than others.

Jonah is not merely the story of a man swallowed by a great fish. It is a story about a prophet whose love for his own nation conflicted with God's love for all nations.

The central question is: "Will we embrace God's kingdom, even when it includes people we consider enemies?"

1. Jonah's Nationalism

Jonah lived during a time when Israel was threatened by the Assyrian Empire and Nineveh was the capital of Assyria. Jonah knew that if Nineveh repented, God might spare them. Instead of rejoicing that sinners

could be saved, Jonah fled. His actions reveal that he preferred Israel's success, Assyria's destruction and National victory over God's mercy

Jonah wanted God's blessings for his people - but God's judgment for everyone else.

2. God's Kingdom Is Bigger Than Any Nation

Throughout Scripture, God repeatedly demonstrates that He rules over all peoples.

We know that God created every nation, He cares about every nation and He judges every nation, however, God offers mercy to every nation.

Nineveh was evil yet God still pursued them. The message is shocking to Jonah, that God's compassion extends even to Israel's enemies.

3. Nationalism Can Blind Us Spiritually

Jonah knew God's character, yet he resisted God's mission. Knowledge without surrender became prejudice. His nationalism produced anger, resentment, self-righteousness and ultimately disobedience. Ironically, the pagan sailors feared God., the Ninevites repented and only the prophet

resisted God.

4. God's Kingdom Includes Our Enemies

Jesus later taught "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;" (Matthew 5:44 - see also Luke 6:27)

Jonah struggled with exactly this principle centuries earlier. The kingdom of God is not based on ethnicity, nationality nor political identity. It is based on repentance, faith and God's grace.

5. The Danger Today

National pride becomes dangerous when it says, "My country deserves God's favour more than others." History shows that Christians have sometimes confused loyalty to God with loyalty to a nation. Whenever national identity becomes greater than Kingdom identity, the church loses its prophetic voice. The gospel crosses borders. God's kingdom welcomes people from every tribe, language, people and nation. "And he [Jesus] said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every

creature." (Mark 16:15)

6. The Question God Leaves Jonah-and Us

The book ends with God's question, "Should I not be concerned about Nineveh...?" (Jonah 4:11)

The question remains unanswered; the reader must answer it. Will we rejoice when God saves people unlike us, or will we resent His grace?

Application

Ask yourself: Are there people I secretly believe are beyond God's mercy? Do I value my political or national identity above my identity as one of God's people? Am I willing to share God's love with those I see as opponents or enemies? Does my heart reflect God's compassion, or Jonah's resentment?
Jonah teaches us that nationalism, when it eclipses God's kingdom, leads to fear, prejudice and resistance to God's mission. God's kingdom, by contrast, is defined by His sovereign rule and His desire to bring people from every nation to repentance. The challenge of Jonah is to let God's compassion reshape our loyalties so that our deepest allegiance is not to a nation, but to God and His purposes for the world.

Chapter 4. Jonah Flees

(Jonah 1) "Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 2) Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. 3) But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. 4) But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. 5) Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep. 6) So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not. 7) And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.

8) Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou? 9) And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land. 10) Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them. 11) Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous. 12) And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you. 13) Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them. 14) Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee. 15) So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging. 16) Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.

17) Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights."

Questions to ponder as you read this chapter:
"Why did Jonah flee?" (Hint: Jonah 4:2)
"Could he really escape God?"

The book of Jonah deliberately uses a series of "downs" to symbolise Jonah's spiritual decline (a downward spiral) as he runs from God.

1. Down to Joppa
"But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof." (Jonah 1:3)

Jonah's first step away from God's call is both geographical and spiritual. Instead of going northeast to Nineveh, he heads toward the port of Joppa to sail west to Tarshish..

2. Down into the ship
"...and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. (Jonah 1:3)

Jonah moves further from God's mission. He doesn't

merely board the ship - he goes down into its interior, further symbolising withdrawal from God's presence.

3. Down into the hold of the ship
"… But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep. (Jonah 1:5)

4. Down into sleep
"… and he lay, and was fast asleep. (Jonah 1:5)

While the storm rages and the sailors pray, Jonah is asleep. His spiritual condition has sunk so low that he is indifferent to the danger around him.

5. Down into the Sea
"They picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea..." (Jonah 1:15)

Jonah's rebellion reaches its lowest point. Rather than obey God, he would rather die.

6. Down into the belly of a fish
"Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." (Jonah 1:17) "Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly" (Jonah 2:1)

7. Down to the Depths of the Earth

In Jonah's prayer, he describes his descent: "I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God." (Jonah 2:6)

This is the deepest point-physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Jonah recognises that only God can save him.

8. The Turning Point

After reaching rock bottom, God rescues Jonah through the great fish. From this point, the movement changes.

(i) Jonah prays

"Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly, 2) And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice. 3) For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me. 4) Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple. 5) The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the

weeds were wrapped about my head. 6) I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God. 7) When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple. 8) They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. 9) But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD." (Jonah 2:1-9)

(ii) God hears Jonah's prayer.
"And the LORD spake unto the fish …" (Jonah 2:10)

(iii) The fish brings Jonah back to land.
"… and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land." (Jonah 2:10)

(iv) God gives Jonah a second chance
"And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, 2) Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." (Jonah 3:1-2)

(v) Jonah goes to Nineveh.
"So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an

exceeding great city of three days' journey." (Jonah 3:3)

(vi) Jonah preaches to Nineveh

"And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (Jonah 3:4). Jonah goes into Nineveh with an eight word sermon; just five words in the Hebrew. One of the great miracles in this story has nothing to do with the fish; there is the miracle of an entire city setting to become right with God.

(vii) Nineveh repents.

"So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. 6) For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. 7) And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: 8) But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their

hands. 9) Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" (Jonah 3:5-9)

What we have here is an overturned city but not a destroyed city; yet in every way; a city that has been overturned. Not upside down, (they were already upside down) but downside up - a complete reversal.

The downward journey becomes an upward journey of restoration and renewed mission. When you're feeling down in the mouth, remember Jonah - He came out all right.

9. An Important Twist

Although Jonah's body comes back up from the sea, his heart still has a "downward" problem. In chapter 4, after Nineveh repents, Jonah becomes angry because God shows mercy. The final chapter reveals that the greatest issue was never Jonah's location but his attitude toward God's compassion.

Key Lesson

The downward progression in Jonah's story illustrate a two-fold spiritual principle: Running away from God leads downward into disobedience, isolation, and despair.

Turning back to God leads upward to forgiveness, restoration, and renewed purpose.

The narrative ultimately shows that the deepest journey is not Jonah's, but God's patient work to transform Jonah's heart.

(For a comparative picture of humanity running from God, compare: Psalm 139 and Romans 3

God is a God of Second Chances

When God called, Jonah ran
Down to a seaport
To flee the Lord on a ship.
God stirred the waves and Jonah swam
But God rescued Jonah with a fish's gulp,
For God is a God of second chances.

When Jonah realized he was alive,
From a belly prison he called to God.
God heard and the great fish
Released his captive onto the shore,
For God is a God of second chances.

God called again and Jonah ran
Down to Nineveh, three days away.
Jonah called, the people responded.
God heard their cries, the people were spared,
For God is a God of second chances.

Jonah sat and sulked and watched for destruction
God gave him some shade
Then took it away for Jonah's education
Thus ending the story with a question,
For God is a God of second chances.

-- Lionel Hartley, 1961

Chapter 5. God's Relentless Pursuing Grace

Everything and everyone in the story obeys God except Jonah and God's discipline is an expression of His mercy.

One of the major themes of Jonah is God's relentless pursuing grace. Even when Jonah runs away, God does not abandon him. Instead, God repeatedly sends people, circumstances, and objects to pursue, discipline, teach, and restore him.

What God Sends for Jonah

1. God Sends Jonah (His commission or calling)
"Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 2) Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me." (Jonah 1:1-2)

Everything begins with God's call. "And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?" (Genesis 3:9) "Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, …" (Jonah 1:1)

Grace starts with God's initiative - He invites Jonah to participate in His mission in order to give Jonah a mission and reveal God's heart for the nations.

2. God Sends a Great Wind
"But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken." (Jonah 1:4)

The storm is not punishment; it is a loving interruption. It is the wake-up call from God. God refuses to let Jonah continue in rebellion without confronting him in order to stop Jonah's flight and draw him back. God is the God of 'Second Chances'. "And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time …" (Jonah 3:1)

3. God Sends a Great Fish
"Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." (Jonah 1:17)

The fish is often misunderstood as judgment. It is actually God's instrument of rescue. Without it, Jonah would have drowned.

Through sending the fish, God chose to save Jonah's

life and give him time to repent.

4. God Sends His Word Again
"And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time …" (Jonah 3:1)

God gives Jonah another opportunity as God chose to restore Jonah to his calling.

This is one of Scripture's clearest pictures of second chances.
Because of the second chance that Jonah was given, God gave the people of the great city of Nineveh a (second?) chance too.

There are many Bible stories that include second chances because the Holy Bible comprises stories about real people like me and you who need a second chance in life from time to time.

(i) Jesus: When John the Revelator wrote to the church of Ephesus (Revelation 2:1) he told them, not that they had not lost love but they had left it, suggesting that the could return (repent).
"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. 5) Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the

first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. …7) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." (Revelation 2:4-5, 7)

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

"It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. 23) They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness." (Lamentations 3:22-23) "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10) If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. 2:1) My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: 2) And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 1:9-10, 1 John 2:1-2)

"Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy." (Micah 7:18) "But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth." (Psalms 86:15) "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." (Jeremiah 29:11)

(ii) David: "And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." (2 Samuel 12:13) It is important to note here, that while his/our sin is forgiven, he/we may still have to face consequences (in this life) of the sin

(iii) Joseph's brothers: "Moreover he [Joseph] kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him." (Genesis 45:15) Forgiveness is a choice. Joseph had a choice to offer or to withhold forgiveness. Forgiveness is offering a second chance to those who have hurt us. Joseph is an example of how to give second chances to others no matter what they have done to us.

Interestingly, Joseph is one of the clearest pictures of Christ in the Old Testament. Theologians call this typology . A "type" is a person, event, or institution that points forward to a greater fulfilment in Jesus. Although Joseph is not identical to Christ, many details of his life anticipate Jesus' ministry.

Here are some of the strongest parallels:
Joseph was the beloved son of his father (Genesis 37:3) and Jesus is the beloved Son of the Father (Matthew 3:17)

Joseph was sent by his father to his brothers (Genesis 37:13-14) and Jesus was sent by the Father to His people (John 3:16-17)

Joseph was rejected and hated by his brothers (Genesis 37:4-8) and Jesus was rejected by His own people (John 1:11)

Joseph was conspired against by his brothers (Genesis 37:18) and religious leaders plotted against Jesus (Matthew 26:3-4)

Joseph was sold for silver (20 pieces) (Genesis 37:28) and Jesus was betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (Matthew 26:15)

Joseph was stripped of his robe (Genesis 37:23) and Jesus was stripped of His garments before crucifixion (Matthew 27:28, 35)

Joseph was falsely accused (Genesis 39:17-18) and Jesus was falsely accused at His trial (Mark 14:55-59)

Joseph suffered though innocent and Jesus also suffered though innocent and is also sinless (1 Peter 2:22-23)

Joseph was numbered with two prisoners (Genesis 40) and Jesus was crucified between two criminals (Luke 23:32-33)

One prisoner with Joseph was saved and one was condemned by Pharaoh and at the crucifixion of Jesus one thief believed and was saved and the other rejected the Christ, thus condemning himself (Luke 23:39-43)

Joseph was exalted from prison to rule Egypt (Genesis 41:39-43) and Jesus was exalted from death to God's right hand to rule as King of Kings (Philippians 2:8-11; Revelation 19:16)

Joseph became the source of bread for the world

during famine and Jesus is the Bread of Life (John 6:35)

Joseph forgave those who wronged him (Genesis 50:20-21) and Jesus forgave those who crucified Him (Luke 23:34)

Joseph saved many lives through his suffering (Genesis 50:20) and Jesus saved humanity through His suffering (Hebrews 2:10)

And there are also some theological parallels:
a). The beloved son
Joseph's special relationship with Jacob points to Jesus' unique relationship with God the Father.

b). Rejection leads to salvation
Joseph's brothers intended evil when they sold him into slavery, yet God used it to preserve Israel and surrounding nations from famine. Joseph himself said "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." (Genesis 50:20) "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28)

Likewise, the crucifixion of Jesus was humanity's greatest act of evil, yet God used it to accomplish salvation.

c). Humiliation before exaltation
Joseph descended into a pit, slavery, and prison before being exalted to Pharaoh's right hand. Jesus humbled Himself unto death before being exalted to the Father's right hand. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6) Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7) But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8) And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 9) Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10) That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11) And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:5-11)

d). The Saviour of the nations
Joseph provided grain not only for Egypt but for surrounding nations. Jesus provides eternal life to

people from every nation.

e). Forgiveness
Instead of taking revenge, Joseph forgave his brothers and reconciled with them. Jesus likewise prayed for His executioners and offers forgiveness to sinners.

"But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. 21) Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them." (Genesis 50:20-21) "Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do..." (Luke 23:34)

As with all biblical types, the correspondence is not perfect; there are some important differences:

Joseph was a sinner who needed God's grace; Jesus has always been sinless.

Joseph suffered because of others' jealousy; Jesus willingly laid down His life as an atoning sacrifice.

Joseph saved people from physical famine; Jesus saves people from sin and eternal death.

Joseph's life demonstrates a recurring biblical pattern: the beloved son is rejected, innocent suffering precedes exaltation, and through that suffering God brings salvation to many.

This pattern reaches its fullest expression in Jesus Christ. That is why many Christians see Joseph as one of the richest Old Testament foreshadowings of Christ, even though the New Testament never explicitly calls him a "type" in the same way it does people like Adam (Romans 5:14). Instead, the parallels emerge from the overall narrative and have been recognized throughout Christian interpretation.

*(See also "*Jonah as a Picture of Christ" *on page 54)*

(iv) Peter: Compare Luke 22:60-62 with Matthew 16:18

(Luke 22:60-62) "And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. 61) And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. 62) And Peter went out, and wept bitterly."

Mark 16:7, But go your way, tell his disciples ***and Peter*** that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you." (Emphasis added - Jesus cared enough for Peter to make sure he heard the good news of the resurrection and so the angel at the sepulchre mentioned Peter by name.)

(v) You and me: "The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression." (Proverbs 19:11) "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." (Colossians 3:13) "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." (Ephesians 4:32) (Luke 17:3-4) "Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. 4) And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." (Luke 17:3-4)

5. God Sends Repentance to Nineveh

As Jonah preaches, the people of Nineveh, from the king to the common people, repent.

"So the people of Nineveh believed God, and

proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. 6) For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. 7) And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: 8) But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. 9) Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? 10) And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not." (Jonah 3:5-10)

I suggest that this demonstrates that God's mercy extends even to Israel's enemies.

6. God Sends a Plant

"And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. " (Jonah 4:6)

Although the plant provides shade and comfort and Jonah is delighted, the real purpose was to prepare Jonah for a lesson in compassion.

7. God Sends a Worm
"But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered (Jonah 4:7)

The worm destroys the plant and this was to expose Jonah's misplaced priorities - he grieves over a plant but not over a city of people.

8. God Sends a Scorching East Wind
"And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live. (Jonah 4:8)

The heat intensifies Jonah's discomfort to bring Jonah to the point where God can confront his attitude and reveal the depth of His own compassion.

Notice this progression reveals a pattern of God's grace.
God sends a call to commission Jonah

God sends a storm to confront disobedience
God sends a fish to rescue and preserve
God sends His word again to restore and recommission
God sends repentance in Nineveh to display His mercy
God sends a plant to provide comfort and teach
God sends a worm to expose Jonah's heart and
God sends a scorching wind to deepen the lesson
God sends a challenging question for Jonah and the reader to answer.

Every "sending" reveals God's pursuing grace. He is not only pursuing Nineveh, He is also pursuing Jonah, and in the final question, God is persuing the reader (you and me).

God uses both blessings (the plant) and hardships (the storm, worm, and wind) to shape Jonah's heart. Will we allow Him to shape ours?

The message is clear: God's grace pursues both the rebellious prophet and the repentant city. He is relentless in His desire to redeem, restore, and teach those He loves. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should

perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

Jonah as a Picture of Christ

Jesus had dinner with a sinner, and the fish thought he would have a sinner for dinner.

One of the richest themes in Jonah is how the prophet serves as a type or foreshadowing of Christ. While Jonah was a flawed and reluctant prophet, Jesus is the perfect and obedient Son. The similarities highlight God's plan of redemption, while the differences magnify Christ's greatness.

Jonah was sent by God to preach to Nineveh (Jonah 1:1-2) but reluctantly accepted his mission. Jesus was sent by Father God to bring salvation to the world (John 3:16-17) and willingly embraced His mission.Although Jonah ran from God's will, Jesus fulfilled it perfectly.

Jonah was sacrificed to save others when he offered to be thrown into the sea to calm God's judgment on the sailors (Jonah 1:12) and Jonah's sacrifice brought peace to those on the ship. Jesus gave His life on the cross to satisfy God's justice (Romans 5:1) and His sacrifice brings peace between God and humanity

The clearest parallel is the mention of three days and three nights. Jesus Himself said, "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40). Jonah's time in the fish foreshadows Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.

Resurrection and New Life

Jonah emerged alive from the fish to continue the evangelistic mission that God gave him and Jesus emerged alive from the tomb and commissioned His disciples to continue the evangelistic mission that he started and to preach to all nations. Both emerge to proclaim God's message, but Jesus does so through His victory over death itself.

A Message of Repentance

Jonah Preached, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (Jonah 3:4) and the people repented, "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way" (Jonah 3:10). Jesus began His ministry with " Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). Both proclaimed repentance, but Jesus also proclaimed the arrival of God's kingdom.

God's Mercy for the Nations

Jonah the Israelite was sent to Gentiles. Jesus also came not only for Israel but for the whole world. The book of Jonah anticipates the global scope of the gospel.

The Sign of Jonah
Jesus referred to Jonah as a sign for His generation.

In Gospel of Matthew 12:41, He said, "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here" (Matthew 12:41). Jesus declares Himself to be the greater Jonah.

Jonah ran from God's call; Jesus obeyed the Father's will completely.

Jonah was a reluctant prophet; Jesus was a willing Saviour.

Jonah was sacrificed to save sailors; Jesus was sacrificed to save the world.

Jonah was three days in the fish; Jesus was three days in the tomb.

Jonah brought temporary deliverance; Jesus brings

eternal salvation.

Jonah preached to one city; Jesus sends the gospel to all nations

Jonah was angry over God's mercy; Jesus rejoices to show mercy

Jonah needed God's grace; Jesus is the source of God's grace

Perhaps the most striking difference is their attitude toward sinners. Jonah resented God's mercy toward Nineveh and wanted judgment, whereas Jesus wept over Jerusalem, welcomed sinners, prayed for His enemies, and gave His life so that they might be forgiven. Where Jonah fled from his enemies, Jesus came to save His enemies.

Jonah points us to Christ, but imperfectly. His life foreshadows Jesus' death and resurrection, especially through the "sign of Jonah (Matthew 12:41)," yet Jonah's failures also contrast the perfection of Christ. Jonah is a reluctant prophet; Jesus is the faithful Redeemer. Jonah struggled to love his enemies; Jesus died for His. As Jesus Himself declared, "[One] greater than Jonah is here."

Jesus is the true and better Jonah.

Chapter 6. Jonah in the Fish

"Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly, 2) And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice. 3) For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me. 4) Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple. 5) The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. 6) I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God. 7) When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple. 8) They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. 9) But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD. 10) And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land." (Jonah 2)

Discuss:

Is this repentance?
What changed?
What remained unchanged?

Notice:
Jonah thanks God *before* being delivered.

A personal application of this thankfulness was brought home to me through a passage from the pen of the American Congregationalist clergyman, social reformer, and speaker, Henry Ward Beecher who wrote: "If one should give me a dish of sand and tell me there were particles of iron in it, I might look for them with my eyes and search for them with my clumsy fingers and be unable to detect them; but let me take a magnet and sweep through it and now would it draw to itself the almost invisible particles by the mere power of attraction. The unthankful heart, like my finger in the sand, discovers no mercies; but let the thankful heart sweep through the day and as the magnet finds the iron, so it will find, in every hour, some heavenly blessings, only the iron in God's sand is gold!"

Chapter 7. Resurrection Theme

Aside: (not to be read at mealtime): Leviticus 18:25 & 28 speaks of the land vomiting out its evil inhabitants and Leviticus 20:22 speaks of the obedient ones not being vomited out of the land.

In Job 20:15 we read the words of one of Job's "friends", Zophar the Naamathite. Zophar's discourse upon the certain misery of the wicked includes the expression, "He hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again: God shall cast them out of his belly." (Which is just another way of saying that wickedness is a retch.)

After the well-known expression "[As a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he" the proverb continues, " Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee. The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words. (Proverbs 23:7,8)

Proverbs 25:16 warns against eating too much honey (remembering that honey, according to Proverbs 24:13, is good for you.) confirming that too much of a good thing is bad for us. (This warning is repeated

in Proverbs 25:27)

Revelation 3:16 reads, "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." This is the most unequivocally definitive verse likening us (embarrassingly) to vomit!

Jonah's emergence from the fish points toward resurrection. There are a few Old Testament patterns: Isaac figuratively received back from death. "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son. 18) Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: 19) Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure" (Hebrews 11:17-19); Joseph descended into a pit before being exalted "And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stripped Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him; 24) And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it" (Genesis 37:23-24); Moses was preserved from death as an infant.

Jonah descended into the deep, "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents,

because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment" (Hebrews 11:23). These and others all anticipate Christ.

The Old Testament does not present the resurrection of Jesus explicitly, but it contains patterns, promises, prophecies, and pictures that prepare the way for the New Testament teaching on resurrection. These themes progressively reveal God's power over death and His promise of new life.

Others include:
Israel's Exodus when Israel passed through the Red Sea and Jordan: "For the LORD your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over" (Joshua 4:23).

Paul later describes this as a kind of baptism (1 Corinthians 10:1-2).

Ezekiel saw a valley full of dry bones (Ezekiel 37). God breathed life into them until they became a living army.

The vision primarily refers to Israel's national

restoration after exile, but it also illustrates God's power to bring life from death.

Elijah and Elisha Raise the Dead: Elijah raised the widow's son (1 Kings 17) and Elisha raised the Shunammite woman's son (2 Kings 4).

Job's hope: despite profound suffering, Job declared, "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: 26) And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: 27) Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me" (Job 19:25-27). these words as express hope beyond death.

David's hope: "I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. 9) Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. 10) For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. 11) Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." (Psalms 16:8-11. In the New Testament, both Peter and Paul apply this ultimately to Jesus' resurrection (Acts 2; Acts 13).

Isaiah's Promise: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead" (Isaiah 26:19).

Daniel's Resurrection Vision: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2).

Hosea's Promise: "After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight" (Hosea 6:2).

In its original context, this speaks of Israel's restoration. Christians have often seen it as foreshadowing Christ's resurrection on the third day.

It is not just Jonah's emergence from the fish that points toward the resurrection, there are several other themes.

A substitute instead of death (Isaac and the ram) points to Jesus, the Lamb of God;

Three-day deliverance (Jonah) points to Christ's resurrection;

New life after suffering (Joseph) points to Jesus exalted after the cross;

Passage through death (the Exodus) points to salvation through Christ;

Dry bones live (Ezekiel 37) points to resurrection life by the Spirit;

Raising the dead (Elijah and Elisha) points to Jesus raises the dead and is raised;

Hope beyond the grave (Job) points to a resurrection hope;

Victory over decay (Psalm 16) points to Christ's empty tomb;

Promise of resurrection (Isaiah 26) points to bodily resurrection;

And the final resurrection (Daniel 12) points to the resurrection of all humanity.

The Old Testament develops the theme of resurrection progressively:

Genesis introduces life emerging from the absence of

life.

The historical books demonstrate God's power over death through miracles.

The Psalms express confidence that God will not abandon His faithful to the grave.

The Prophets increasingly promise both national restoration and future resurrection.

Jonah provides a striking sign of three days followed by deliverance, which Jesus explicitly identifies as foreshadowing His own death and resurrection.

Taken together, these passages prepare the way for the New Testament proclamation that in Jesus Christ, God has decisively conquered death and guaranteed the future resurrection of all who belong to Him.

Forgiveness

My heart was heavy, for its trust had been
Abused, its kindness answered with foul wrong;
So, turning gloomily from my fellow-men,
One summer Sabbath day I strolled among
The green mounds of the village burial-place;
Where, pondering how all human love and hate
Find one sad level; and how, soon or late,
Wronged and wrongdoer, each with meekened face,
And cold hands folded over a still heart,
Pass the green threshold of our common grave,
Whither all footsteps tend, whence none depart,
Awed for myself, and pitying my race,
Our common sorrow, like a mighty wave,
Swept all my pride away, and trembling I forgave!

— John Greenleaf Whittier

Chapter 8. Nineveh Repents

(Jonah 3) "And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, 2) Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. 3) So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey. 4) And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. 5) So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. 6) For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. 7) And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: 8) But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. 9)

Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? 10) And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not."

The king humbles himself, fasts and repents and the city believes God. No sacrifices are mentioned because repentance is faith responding to God's warning. (see Luke 15 and Acts 17)

Repentance is a deep change of mind and heart that leads to turning away from sin and turning toward God. It is more than just feeling sorry or sad about doing wrong; it is a complete fresh start and a change in how you live.

Change of Mind: The original Greek word for repentance (*metanoia*) means to think differently or change your mind.

Turning Around: It means stopping bad actions and choosing to go God's way instead of your own way.

Not Just Sadness: Feeling guilty is part of it, but true repentance changes your daily life and choices

Chapter 9. Jonah's Anger

(Jonah 4) "But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. 2) And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. 3) Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live. 4) Then said the LORD, Doest thou well to be angry? 5) So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city. 6) And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. 7) But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. 8) And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in

himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live. 9) And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death. 10) Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: 11) And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?"

Jonah reveals why he fled: "And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil" (Jonah 4:2). Ironically:

Jonah loved receiving grace but hated extending grace to others. (A thought question for reflection? Am I a Jonah when it comes to grace?)

Chapter 10. God's Final Question

The Book of Jonah is the only book in the Holy Bible to end with a question and it ends with God's question: "And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six-score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?" (Jonah 4:11)

Why end with a question? Because every reader must answer. The book of Jonah ends with a question because God is not only teaching Jonah - He is teaching every reader. Instead of resolving the story neatly, the final question invites us to examine our own hearts.

Here are several reasons why the book ends this way:

1. It Invites the Reader to Respond
The book never tells us how Jonah answered God's question. That silence is intentional. The real question becomes: "Do you agree with God's compassion?" and "Will you rejoice when God shows mercy to people you dislike?" The questioning ending turns the

reader into a participant rather than a spectator.

2. It Reveals the Book's Main Character
Many people that I have spoken to think that Jonah is the main character. In reality, the book is primarily about God: God's sovereignty over creation, God's mercy toward sinners, God's patience with His prophet and God's concern for all nations.

The final question focuses our attention on God's heart rather than Jonah's actions.

3. It Exposes Jonah's Heart
Throughout the book, Jonah fled from God, was rescued by grace finally obeyed reluctantly and then became angry when Nineveh was spared. God contrasts Jonah's concern for a plant (Jonah 4:9) with His own concern for an entire city. Jonah mourned one plant and one day of shade, whereas God cared about more than 120,000 people, their spiritual condition and even their livestock. The question exposes the imbalance in Jonah's values.

4. It Challenges Nationalism
Jonah loved Israel. and God loved both Israel and Nineveh. The ending asks whether God's people will embrace His global mission or limit His grace to only

those they consider deserving. This final question is a challenge to put God's kingdom above national, ethnic, or personal loyalties ("Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? 32) (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. 33) But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. 34) Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Matthew 6:31-34))

5. It Highlights God's Compassion
God's concern extends to sinful people, spiritually confused people, foreigners and even the animals. "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" (Matthew 6:26)

The ending reminds us that God's mercy is broader than human prejudice.

6. It Anticipates the Gospel
The unanswered question points forward to the New

Testament. Jesus came not only for Israel but for the world. The book asks whether we will celebrate God's grace reaching outsiders - a theme that becomes central in the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles in the book of Acts of the Apostles.

The final question functions like the closing line of a parable. Rather than tying everything up neatly, it lingers in the reader's mind. The book isn't primarily asking, "Did Nineveh deserve mercy?" It's asking, "Will you accept that God is free to show mercy to whom He wills - and will you rejoice in that mercy?"

The silence after God's question is intentional. Jonah's answer is left unwritten so that every generation of readers is invited to answer it themselves.

The book of Jonah ends with a question because the story is unfinished until the reader answers it. God leaves Jonah and us with a choice: Will we share His compassion for a broken world, even when it includes people we would rather see judged? The open ending ensures that the book is not simply about an ancient prophet's struggle; it becomes a mirror in which every generation must examine its own heart.

Will we bring these thoughts into our daily living and our weekly worship?
Will the lessons from Jonah affect our lives?

My ideal image of a great church is very selfish:
It will be composed of ordinary people just like me.
It will epitomise family fellowship if I treat each member as a much-loved brother or sister.
It will welcome visitors if I make the effort to talk and listen to strangers.
It will be friendly if I am friendly - I will only make friends by being one.
It will have reverence if 1 remember always to respect the sanctuary.
It will help me to grow if I am amenable to counsel.

My ideal image of a great church is very selfish:
It will do a mighty work for God if I also work, volunteer, participate and become involved.
It will have filled-to-capacity prayer meetings and evangelistic programmes if I support them.
It will be humble if I don't brag or seek kudos for myself.
It will make munificent gifts to many worthwhile causes if I am generous.

Members will be true saints if I uphold them daily in prayer (and if they are not, I must continue to pray for them and me).
It will be a true Sunday-keeping church if I honour the
Sabbath, especially at the opening and closing of God's gift in time.
The rustle of pages will be heard if I, too, open my Bible and read along with the preacher.

My ideal image of a great church is very selfish:
It will have a vibrant Sunday School lesson if I balance participating in the discussion with keeping quiet to let others contribute.
There will be an authentic and personal concern for the welfare of attendees if I am genuinely sincere in my concern for them.
It will have the best possible pastoral and leadership team if I daily pray for them.
The leaders will feel valued if I tell others of their virtues and give to them personal words of affirmation and acknowledgement.
It will bring others into its fellowship if I help to bring them also.
It will have seats that are full if I attend regularly and invite others to fill them.

The neighbouring community will want to be involved in my ideal church if I go door-to-door and invite them.

My ideal image of a great church is very selfish:

Nothing negative will ever be heard about it if I only talk about the 'positives'.
It will be a place of nurture if I stop to listen to people and help them where I can.
It will be a witness to the community if I do my part in telling others about Jesus.
It will resonate with joyful music if I join in the singing.
Absent members will feel valued if I notice their absence and contact them during the week to let them know that they were missed.
Visitors will want to come back if I radiate warmth, genuine love, diplomacy and tact.
Pleasant conversations will fill the foyer if I let others talk about themselves rather than me talk about me.
It will stay alive if I am faithful to its mission.
It will be a church of loyalty and love, of faith and service if I, who make it what it is, am filled with these qualities.

My ideal image of a great church is very selfish:
I will get much from my ideal church if I contribute much to it.
Therefore, through the power of God, I must be everything that I want my church to be.

Chapter 11. Salvation Belongs to the Lord.

"… Salvation is of the LORD" (Jonah 2:9). This summarizes the gospel.

Jonah 2:9 is one of the greatest gospel statements in the Old Testament. This simple declaration captures the heart of the gospel because it teaches that salvation is God's work from beginning to end.

Here are several ways Jonah 2:9 summarises the gospel:

1. God Is the Source of Salvation
Jonah had exhausted every human option. He could not swim to safety. He could not save himself. He could not bargain with death. Only God could rescue him. Likewise, the gospel teaches that we cannot save ourselves from sin. Salvation is entirely God's initiative. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9) Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9).

2. Salvation Is an Act of Grace
Someone tried telling me recently that God helps those who help themselves. The truth of the Gospel is that God helps those who can't help themselves! Jonah deserved judgment. He had disobeyed God, tried to run from God's presence and refused God's mission. Yet God rescued him. That is grace.

Similarly, Paul tells us in Romans, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7) For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. 8) But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:6-8) God saves the undeserving.

3. Salvation Comes Through Death and New Life
Jonah descended into what he described as the realm of death. "I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever" (Jonah 2:6). Then God brought him back.

Jesus later identified Jonah's experience as a sign pointing to His own death and resurrection (Matthew 12:40). Jonah's rescue foreshadows Christ's greater work of salvation.

4. Salvation Leads to Worship and Obedience
Jonah continues "But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD" (Jonah 2:9). True salvation produces gratitude and renewed obedience. Christians are not saved by good works but are saved for good works, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10).

5. Salvation Is for all Nations
Immediately after Jonah is rescued, he goes to Nineveh and his personal salvation becomes the means by which others hear God's message. Likewise, the gospel moves outward like ripples on a pond.

God saves His people so they can proclaim His salvation to every nation. "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19) Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20) Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:18-20). God's missionary heart did not begin in Matthew - it is

visible in Jonah.

7. Jonah Foreshadows the Gospel Going to the Gentiles

"… Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: 10) And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, 11) And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: 12) Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. 13) And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. 14) But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. 15) And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. 16) This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven" (Acts 10:9). And Peter interprets in verses 34 and 35: "34) Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: 35) But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him Acts 10: 34-35).

After Jesus' resurrection, the gospel spread rapidly

beyond Israel through the ministry recorded in Acts of the Apostles. The book of Jonah prepares readers for this expansion by showing that God has always desired people from every nation to know Him.

The book of Jonah fits within the larger biblical narrative:
God promised Abraham "And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." (Genesis 12:3)

The Psalms repeatedly call all nations to praise the Lord.

The prophets envision the nations coming to worship God.

Jonah demonstrates God actively pursuing a Gentile nation.

Jesus commissions His followers to make disciples of all nations. (Matthew 28:18-20)

The Holy Bible ends with people from every tribe and language and people and nation" worshipping God: "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds,

and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;"

(Revelation 7:9).

Jonah reveals that God's mission has always been global. His love is not limited to one nation, race, or culture. By sending Jonah to Nineveh, showing mercy to pagan sailors, and ending with a plea for compassion, God makes it clear that His saving purposes embrace the whole world. The book prepares the way for the gospel, in which Jesus Christ opens the door of salvation to all nations, fulfilling God's plan from the beginning.

(Compare Genesis 12, Isaiah 49, Matthew 28 and Revelation 7)

Thought Questions

Discussion Questions

1. Why was Jonah unwilling to preach to Nineveh?

2. What does Jonah teach us about God's character?

3. Why did Jesus compare Himself to Jonah?

4. What does Jonah reveal about repentance?

5. How is Jonah a picture of the gospel?

6. What does the ending teach about God's compassion?

7. Who are the "Ninevites" in our own lives?

8. How should Jonah shape the church's mission today?

Personal Questions

Do I share God's compassion?

Am I angry when grace reaches those I dislike?

Do I rejoice in God's mercy?

Do I care about the people God cares about?

Are there groups I find difficult to love or reach?

Does my heart reflect God's compassion for all peoples?

Am I willing to participate in God's mission across cultural, ethnic, and national boundaries?

Appendix: Key Scriptures for reflection

(Matthew 12:38-41) "Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. 39) But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: 40) For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. 41) The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here."

(Luke 11:29-32) "And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. 30) For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation. 31) The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear

the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. 32) The men of Nineve shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here."

(Romans 3:21-26) "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22) Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: 23) For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; 24) Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: 25) Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; 26) To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

(Romans 5:6-11) "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7) For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. 8) But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9)

Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. 10) For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. 11) And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."

(Ephesians 2:1-10) "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins: 2) Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3) Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. 4) But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5) Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: 7) That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. 8) For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift

of God: 9) Not of works, lest any man should boast. 10) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

(Colossians 2:13-15) "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; 14) Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; 15) And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it."

(2 Corinthians 5:17-21) "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. 18) And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; 19) To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. 20) Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. 21) For he hath made him to be

sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

(Revelation 7:9-10) "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; 10) And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."

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